

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A virtual world comprising:

a virtual environment;

5 a plurality of virtual elements within said virtual environment, each of said virtual elements being capable of interacting with other of said virtual elements within the virtual environment; and

10 user controls for enabling a user to interact with at least one of said virtual elements within said virtual environment;

wherein at least one of said virtual elements comprises a virtual character comprising a behavior state, an emotion state and a learning state, and  
15 wherein said behavior state, said emotion state and said learning state are capable of changing in response to (i) interaction with other virtual elements within the virtual environment, and/or (ii) commands from said user input controls; and

20 wherein said virtual environment is configured so that additional virtual elements can be introduced into said virtual environment.

2. A virtual character for disposition within a virtual environment, said virtual character comprising a behavior state, an emotion state and a learning state, and wherein said behavior state, said emotion state and said learning state are capable of changing in response to (i) interaction with other virtual elements within the virtual environment, and/or (ii) commands from outside said virtual environment.

3. A virtual character according to claim 2 wherein said virtual character further comprises a sensory capability for sensing other virtual elements within said virtual environment.

4. A virtual character according to claim 3 wherein said sensory capability is configured to sense the presence of other virtual elements within said virtual environment.

5. A virtual character according to claim 3 wherein said sensory capability is configured to sense

the motion of other virtual elements within said  
virtual environment.

5           6.    A virtual character according to claim 4  
              wherein said sensory capability is configured to sense  
              a characteristic of other virtual elements within said  
              virtual environment.